

# You can treat yourself this Easter

## Happy Easter from DRWF

If you have sweet tooth you may feel a little down in the dumps with Easter round the corner, especially if you are newly diagnosed and have a sweet tooth.

But the need to avoid chocolate and sugar entirely is a myth, you need not miss out completely because you have diabetes.

Dietary advice for people with diabetes is the same as for someone without - A healthy balanced diet with everything in moderation.

## Easter treats

Easter comes but once a year and a little extra at this time should not drastically alter your glucose control. The odd hot cross bun with low fat spread or a small piece of simnel cake at Easter. Try to maintain a healthy carbohydrate intake over the Easter period and make sure you don't miss meals.

## Chocolate Easter Eggs

Just because you have diabetes it doesn't mean to say that you can't eat any chocolate at all.

Small amounts of chocolate can be eaten as part of a healthy diet without detrimental effect on your blood glucose control. An ordinary Easter egg is fine but make sure it is spread it over the whole Easter period rather than eating the whole lot on Easter Sunday.

Recent research has also shown that dark chocolate in small quantities may have health benefits when it comes to increasing good cholesterol in people with type 2 diabetes.

## The myth of the Diabetic Easter Egg

If you have had diabetes for many years you will know that diabetic chocolate used to be quite popular as an alternative to regular chocolate. However, diabetic Easter eggs do not offer any special benefit and they are thought to be expensive and unnecessary.

In fact, current thinking is that diabetic chocolate is just as high in calories as normal chocolate and can still raise blood glucose levels. It can also create a laxative effect when consumed in large quantities.



If you have diabetes, it doesn't mean that you have to avoid chocolate this Easter.

## Think about alternative Easter gifts

Of course, you can always consider alternative Easter gifts to chocolate eggs this year. How about flowers or a pamper session as gifts? It may well be that Easter eggs are best avoided if you or one of your loved ones is trying to lose weight for example.

## More information on healthy eating

DRWF produce a free information leaflet

called 'A healthy diet and diabetes'. You can download it online at:

[www.drwf.org.uk/information](http://www.drwf.org.uk/information) or alternatively, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope (to the value of 35p) marked 'Healthy eating leaflet' to the address on the back of this newsletter.

More information on a healthy diet is also available from The Food Standards Agency website:  
<http://www.food.gov.uk>

## Sugar, the myth dispelled

**By Azmina Govindji**  
Registered Dietitian and  
Consultant Nutritionist and  
member of the DRWF Editorial  
Advisory Board

There still seems to be confusion about whether or not people with diabetes can have sugar. Many of you may have been diagnosed some time ago and it seems that a lot of people are still keeping to outdated advice - either because their GP is unaware of research on sugar and its effect on blood glucose levels, or because they have been given a diet sheet years ago and have not seen a dietitian recently.

If you have diabetes, you are entitled to a referral to a state registered dietitian. If you have not been given one, make sure you ask for one through your doctor or diabetes clinic.

The advice for people with diabetes with regards to lifestyle is to follow a healthy balanced diet and take regular

exercise. A healthy balanced diet is in line with national recommendations for people with or without diabetes. In short, it is low in sugar (not sugar free), fat (esp. saturated fat) and salt, and high in fibre.

Choose moderate amounts of low glycaemic carbohydrates (such as beans, lentils and pasta) as they help to stabilise blood glucose levels. When sugar is taken as part of a low glycaemic meal, such as porridge, your blood glucose goes up more slowly, despite the fact that you have added sugar to the porridge. If you plan to have a dessert which contains a little sugar, it's best to have it at the end of a low glycaemic meal. Simply adding vegetables or a salad to your meal and watching you portion size can help to reduce its glycaemic effect.

So, just because you have diabetes does not mean you have to have a 'sugar free' diet, or that you have to eat specialist diabetic products.